



Montgomery County Council

For Immediate Release

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GEORGE LEVENTHAL ELECTED NEW COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Marilyn Praisner to Become Council Vice President

The Montgomery County Council today unanimously elected George Leventhal as Council President for the coming year. The Council also unanimously chose Marilyn Praisner, a 15-year Council veteran who chairs the Management & Fiscal Policy Committee, as Council Vice President. Both are Democrats.

Leventhal, who served the past year as Council Vice President, succeeds outgoing President Tom Perez.

"I look forward to serving as Council President and thank my colleagues for their vote of confidence," said Leventhal. "It's an honor to serve the people of Montgomery County. It's up to the nine of us on the Council to preserve the things that make living here so special. It's up to us to maintain our tradition of good government and good management and make sure that the door of opportunity remains open for all, regardless of where you come from, what language you speak at home or where you worship."

Leventhal said he intends for the Council to pass a package of legislative reforms affecting governance of the Planning Board before the Council receives the County Executive's FY 2007 budget proposal in March. "What is the basic lesson of Clarksburg?" he asked. "Let me tell you. We are here to serve the people of Montgomery County. Those of us in government cannot forget that. We are here to meet the needs of the people who sent us here and who pay our salaries... And the lessons of Clarksburg are not limited to Park & Planning. I am talking about all county government agencies. We need to re-instill a culture of customer service in county government."

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Leventhal also spoke of the need to address ongoing challenges confronting county government, including traffic congestion, management of growth and development, and insisting that more houses are built that working families can afford. He said he was optimistic that the Council would be able to provide tax relief in the upcoming budget and called for an increased investment in maintenance and infrastructure of county facilities.

Leventhal, 43 years old, was first elected as an At-Large Councilmember in November 2002. As chair of the Health & Human Services Committee, he has been the leader in County efforts to expand access to basic health care for all County residents. He has been the County's leading proponent for using more clean renewable energy sources. He was a key supporter of the legislation which passed the Council earlier this year to set aside 10 percent of county contracts for local small businesses. He has also worked closely with Praisner to improve the mechanism by which grants are awarded to non-profit organizations and brokered Council approval for final funding of the new Strathmore Performing Arts Center in 2004 by protecting County taxpayers from having to pay several million dollars in cost overruns.

Leventhal previously worked for the Association of American Universities, as legislative director for U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski and on the staff of the U.S. Senate Finance Committee. From 1996 to 2001 he served as chairman of the Montgomery County Democratic Central Committee.

He received a Master of Administrative Science degree in public administration from the Johns Hopkins University and a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from the University of California at Berkeley.

He grew up in Maryland and lives in Takoma Park with his wife Soraia and their two sons, Daniel, ten, and Francisco, six.

Marilyn Praisner is in her fourth term on the Council, where she is a member of the Planning, Housing & Economic Development Committee as well as chairing the Management and Fiscal Policy Committee. She previously served as Council Vice President in 1992 and 1996, and as Council President in 1993 and 1997.

"I look forward to working closely with my fellow Councilmembers and the community at this turning point in our County's future," said Praisner. "In the coming year this Council will face crucial decisions affecting our youth, our environment and our quality of life."

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On the Council, Praisner has taken the lead on issues as diverse as early childhood development and the environment, technology and fiscal policy. She is a national leader on telecommunications issues and is the foremost champion for County consumers on cable issues.

Prior to her election to the Council, Praisner was twice elected to the Montgomery County Board of Education, serving as its president in 1984 and 1987 and leading efforts to reduce class size, expand counseling, and promoting links to day care and health services.

She is past president of the Maryland Association of Counties and a member of the board of directors of the National Association of Counties, where she is chair of its Telecommunications and Technology Steering Committee.

Before entering partisan political office, Praisner spent 16 years at the Central Intelligence Agency, including service as an intelligence analyst, Branch Chief, and staff member for the Deputy Director of Intelligence.

A graduate of Douglass College at Rutgers University with a degree in journalism, she is married to Donald Praisner and lives in Calverton. She has three children, all of whom graduated from Paint Branch High School, and four grandchildren.

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